



VDACS

Virginia Department of Agriculture, Office of Meat and Poultry Services
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FACT SHEET

Inspection of Meat & Poultry Products

Safe meat and poultry products are a very important part of our food supply. Inspection programs help ensure the safety of these products for the public. Various forms of inspection are performed during meat and poultry production depending on how they are sold and used. In most cases, these operations fall into one of three categories: continuous inspection, custom exempt or retail exempt. This fact sheet describes the three inspection categories your business may fall under.

CONTINUOUS INSPECTION

Meat and poultry business operators who wish to sell their products to other businesses are required to be under continuous inspection. This means that their process is inspected every day during operations to ensure they are producing safe food. For example, in a slaughter operation, every animal must be inspected to determine that the meat comes from an animal free from signs of disease.

Continuous inspection is required for any business that wishes to sell their products to other retail outlets, such as grocery stores, restaurants or other food service institutions. Virginia businesses that need to have this type of inspection have two options for inspection:

1. **Federal Inspection:** Operators who wish to produce and sell their products in other state and/or for export to other countries must be inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). These businesses may slaughter their own animals or purchase their products from other FSIS/USDA inspected sources and further process these products under continuous inspection.
2. **State Inspection:** Operators who wish to produce and sell their products only within the state can be inspected by the Office of Meat and Poultry Services. These businesses may slaughter their own animals or purchase their products from a USDA inspected source or from other Virginia State Inspected establishments for further processing in their facility.

CUSTOM EXEMPT OPERATORS

The Federal Meat Inspection Act, the Poultry Products Inspection Act, and the Virginia Meat and Poultry Inspection Act exempt the preparation of livestock products and the processing of poultry products from mandatory inspection when the owner of the livestock or poultry slaughters it for his own use, or for use by members of his household or nonpaying guests. Custom slaughter or processing may also be conducted when the animal is slaughtered or processed by

someone other than the owner for the personal use of the owner of the animal. The FMIA, PPIA, and VMPIA require that those who custom slaughter or process meat and poultry ensure that carcasses and products are:

1. not adulterated or misbranded;
2. prepared under sanitary conditions;
3. properly marked and packaged; and
4. stored separately from other products.

Owner/operators who conduct custom exempt operations must comply with the meat and poultry regulations for exempt operations (9 CFR 303.1, 381.13, and 381.14) and some of the sanitation regulations (9 CFR 416.5, except for 9 CFR 416.2(g)(2) through (6)). If an official meat establishment conducts custom exempt operations, all the provisions of the sanitation regulation (9CFR Part 416) apply to the custom operations. Federally & State inspected poultry establishments are prohibited under the PPIA (21 U.S.C. 464(c)(1)(B)) from conducting custom exempt poultry operations. In addition, poultry custom exempt operators cannot buy or sell any poultry products for use as human food.

RETAIL EXEMPT PROCESSORS

These businesses buy meat and poultry products from approved inspected sources (either FSIS or State inspected) and then sell these products at retail in their facility. Retail sales are to the final consumer. These operations are inspected by the Office of Food & Dairy (804) 786-3520 and must meet their regulations for producing food products.

For additional information on inspection requirements contact:

Virginia Department of Agriculture, Office of Meat & Poultry Services: 804-786-4569 or visit www.vdacs.virginia.gov.

FSIS Strategic Initiatives Partnerships and Outreach Staff: 202-690-6520 or visit www.fsis.usda.gov

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